

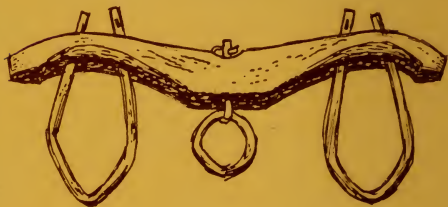
LITTLE BLUE BOOK NO. **351**
Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Memories of Lincoln

Walt Whitman

LINCOLN ROOM

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TEN CENT POCKET SERIES NO. 351

Edited by E. Haldeman-Julius

Memories of Lincoln

Walt Whitman

HALDEMAN-JULIUS COMPANY
GIRARD, KANSAS

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

973.7263

H2 W59 m

1923

cop. 2

Lincoln
Room

6 May 54 HSEARBY

MEMORIES OF LINCOLN.

He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,

Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.

Great captains, with their guns and drums.

Disturb our judgment for the hour,

But at last silence comes;

These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame.

The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

. JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

FOREWORD.

Whitman did not subject Lincoln to the literary but to the human motive. Lincoln does not become a literary figure by his touch. Does not become a man in a book. After Whitman is done with him Lincoln still remains Lincoln. No way reduced. No way aggrandized. Only better understood. His background does not become a book. His background remains what it was. Remains life. Generic life. As life is where life finds life at the root. I may let Whitman put in a word for himself. Whitman said to me of Lincoln:

“Lincoln is particularly my man—particularly belongs to me; yes; and by the same token I am Lincoln’s man: I guess I particularly belong to him: we are afloat in the same stream—we are rooted in the same ground.”

To know the Lincoln of Whitman you want to know the Whitman of Whitman. Whitman was literary. But he was not first of all literary. Or last of all literary. First of all he was human. He was not the leaves of a book. He was the bone and flesh of a man. Yes, he was that something or other not bone or flesh which is also of a man—which finally is the man. Simply literary analysis can make little out of Whitman. He does not yield to the scalpel. He is not to be resurrected from an inkpot. His voice falls in with the prophet voices. He was not unlettered. He knew the

alphabet. But he kept all alphabetical arrogance well in hand. The letter was kept in hand. The spirit was left free. You cannot buy a ticket for Athens or Weimar or Paris or London or Boston and reach Whitman. He is never reached in that circle. The literary centers do not lead to him. You have got to travel to him by another route. You go East and find the Buddhistic canticles. You consult the Zoroastrian avatars. And you take the word of Jesus for a great deal. And you may hit Socrates on the way. And you keep on with your journey, touching here and there in European history certain men, certain influences. Going into port now and then. Never going where men compete for literary judgment. Never where men set out to acquit themselves immortally as artists. Keeping forever close to the careless rhythms of original causes. So you go on. And go on. And by and by you arrive at Whitman. Not by way of the university. Not by way of Shakespeare. Not by way of the literary experts and adepts. But by human ways. To try to find Whitman by way of Shakespeare or Moliere would be hopeless. I do not disparage the other routes to other men. I am only describing this route to Whitman. This route, which is the only route. Whitman chants and prays and soars. He is not pretty. He is only beautiful. He is not beautiful with the beauty of beauty. He is beautiful with the beauty of truth. The pen can easily miss Whitman. But the heart reaches him direct. Whitman is therefore the best route to Lincoln. The same

process which provides Whitman for you provided Lincoln for Whitman. Whitman said to me again about Lincoln:

“There was no reason why Lincoln should not have been a prophet rather than a politician; he was in fact a divine prophet-politician; in him for almost the first time prophecy had something to say in politics. I shouldn't wonder but that in another age of the world Lincoln would have been a chosen man to lead in some rebellion against ecclesiastical institutions and religious form and ceremony.”

HORACE TRAUBEL.

The main effect of this poem is of strong solemn, and varied music; and it involves in its construction a principle after which perhaps the great composers most work—namely, spiritual auricular analogy. At first it would seem to defy analysis, so rapt is it, and so indirect. No reference whatever is made to the mere fact of Lincoln's death; the poet does not even dwell upon its unprovoked atrocity, and only occasionally is the tone that of lamentation; but, with the intuitions of the grand art, which is the most complex when it seems most simple, he seizes upon three beautiful facts of nature, which he weaves into a wreath for the dead President's tomb. The central thought is of death, but around this he curiously twines, first, the early-blooming lilacs which the poet may have plucked the day the dark shadow came; next the song of the hermit thrush, the most sweet and solemn of all our songsters, heard at twilight in the dusky cedars; and with these the evening star, which, as many may remember, night after night in the early part of that eventful spring, hung low in the west with unusual and tender brightness. These are the premises whence he starts his solemn chant.

The attitude, therefore, is not that of being bowed down and weeping hopeless tears, but of singing a commemorative hymn, in which the voices of nature join, and fits that exalted condition of the soul which serious events and the presence of death induce.

JOHN BURROUGHS.

I.

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD
BLOOM'D.

1

When lilacs last in the dooryard
bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the
western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with
ever-returning spring.
Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to
me you bring,
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping
star in the west,
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful
night!

O great star disappear'd—O the black
murk that hides the star!

O cruel hands that hold me powerless—
O helpless soul of me!

O harsh surrounding cloud that will not
free my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-
house near the white-wash'd
palings,

Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with
heart-shaped leaves of rich green,

With many a pointed blossom rising
delicate, with the perfume strong
I love,

With every leaf a miracle—and from
this bush in the dooryard,

With delicate-color'd blossoms and
heart-shaped leaves of rich green,

A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a
song.

Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoid-
ing the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.
Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well
dear brother I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou
would'st surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land,
amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods,
where lately the violets peep'd
from the ground, spotting the
gray debris,

Amid the grass in the fields each side of
the lanes, passing the endless
grass,

Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every
grain from its shroud in the
dark-brown fields uprisen,

Passing the apple-tree blows of white
and pink in the orchards,

Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest
in the grave,

Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and
streets,

Through day and night with the great
cloud darkening the land,

With the pomp of the inloop'd flags
with the cities draped in black,

With the show of the States themselves
as of crape-veil'd women stand-
ing,

With processions long and winding and
the flambeaus of the night,

With the countless torches lit, with the
 silent sea of faces and the un-
 bared heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving
 coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the
 thousand voices rising strong
 and solemn,
With all the mournful voices of the
 dirges pour'd around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering
 organs—where amid these you
 journey,
With the tolling, tolling bell's perpetual
 clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins
 all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would
 I chant a song for you O sane
 and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with roses and
 early lilies,
But mostly and now the lilac that
 blooms the first,
Copious I break, I break the sprigs
 from the bushes,
With loaded arms I come, pouring for
 you,
For you and the coffins all of you O
 death.)

8

O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant
 as a month since I walk'd,
As I walk'd in silence the transparent
 shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as
 you bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down
 as if to my side, (while the other
 stars all look'd on,)

As we wander'd together the solemn
night, (for something I know
not what kept me from sleep,)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the
rim of the west how full you
were of woe,
As I stood on the rising ground in the
breeze in the cool transparent
night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was
lost in the netherward black of
the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied
sank, as where you sad orb
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was
gone.

9.

Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your
notes, I hear your call,
I hear, I come presently, I understand
you,

But a moment I linger, for the lustrous
star has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds
and detains me.

10

O how shall I warble myself for the
dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the
large sweet soul that has gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the
grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown
from the Western sea, till there
on the prairies meeting,
These and with these and the breath of
my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber
walls?

And what shall the pictures be that I
hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I
love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms
and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown,
and the gray smoke lucid and
bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the
gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun,
burning, expanding the air,
With the fresh sweet herbage under
foot, and the pale green leaves
of the trees prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the
breast of the river, with a wind-
dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with
many a line against the sky, and
shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so
dense, and stacks of chimneys,

And all the scenes of life and the work-
shops, and the workmen home-
ward returning.

Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and
the sparkling and hurrying tides,
and the ships,

The varied and ample land, the South
and the North in the light, Ohio's
shores and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies
cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and
haughty,

The violet and purple morn with just-
felt breezes,

The gentle soft-born measureless light.
The miracle spreading bathing all, the
fulfill'd noon,

The coming eve delicious, the welcome
night and the stars,

Over my cities shining all, enveloping
man and land.

13

Song on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses,
 pour your chant from the bushes,
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the
 cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your
 reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of utter-
 most woe.

O liquid and free and tender!

O wild and loose to my soul—O won-
 drous singer!

You only I hear—yet the star holds me,
 (but will soon depart,)

Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds
 me.

14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd
 forth,

In the close of the day with its light
and the fields of spring, and the
farmers preparing their crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my
land with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after
the perturb'd winds and the
storms,)
Under the arching heavens of the after-
noon swift passing, and the
voices of children and women,
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw
the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with
richness, and the fields all busy
with labor,
And the infinite separate houses, how
they all went on, each with its
meals and minutia of daily
usages,
And the streets how their throbbings
throbb'd, and the cities pent—lo,
then and there,

Falling upon them all and among them
all, enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long
black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the
sacred knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as
walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking
the other side of me,
And I in the middle as with companions,
and as holding the hands of com-
panions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night
that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the
path by the swamp in the dim-
ness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars and
ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest
receiv'd me,

The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd
us comrades three,
And he sang the carol of death, and a
verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the
ghostly pines so still,
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my com-
rades in the night,
And the voice of my spirit tallied the
song of the bird. .

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely ar-
riving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and
knowledge curious,*

And for love, sweet love—but praise!
praise! praise!

For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-
enfolding death.

Dark mother always gliding near with
soft feet,

Have none chanted for thee a chant of
fullest welcome?

Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee
above all,

I bring thee a song that when thou
must indeed come, come unfalter-
ingly.

Approach strong deliveress,

When it is so, when thou hast taken
them I joyously sing the dead,

Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.

From me to thee glad serenades,

Dances for thee I propose saluting thee,
adornments and feastings for
thee,

*And the sights of the open landscape
and the high-spread sky are fit-
ting,
And life and the fields, and the huge
and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whisper-
ing wave whose voice I know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and
well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close
to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over
the myriad fields and the prairies
wide,*

*Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the
teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to
thee O death.*

Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown
bird,

With pure deliberate notes spreading
filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the
swamp-perfume,

And I with my comrades there in the
night.

While my sight that was bound in my
eyes unclosed,

As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of
battle-flags,

Borne through the smoke of the battles
and pierc'd with missiles I saw
them,

And carried hither and yon through
the smoke, and torn and bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the
staffs, (and all in silence),

And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men,
 I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the
 slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they
 suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the
 mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the mus-
 ing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my com-
 rades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and
 the tallying song of my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet
 varying ever-altering song,

As low and wailing, yet clear the notes,
rising and falling, flooding the
night,

Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning
and warning, and yet again
bursting with joy,

Covering the earth and filling the
spread of the heaven,

As that powerful psalm in the night I
heard from recesses,

Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-
shaped leaves,

I leave thee there in the dooryard,
blooming, returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, front-
ing the west, communing with
thee,

O comrade lustrous with silver face in
the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements
out of the night,

The song, the wondrous chant of the
gray-brown bird,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd
in my soul,
With the lustrous and drooping star
with the countenance full of woe,
With the holders holding my hand near-
ing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and
their memory ever to keep, for
the dead I loved so well,
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my
days and lands—and this for his
dear sake,
Lilac and star and bird twined with the
chant of my soul,
There in the fragrant pines and the
cedars dusk and dim.

II.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip
is done,

The ship has weather'd every rack, the
prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the
people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the
vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain
lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! My Captain! rise up and
hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for
you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths
—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass,
their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the
deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are
pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has
no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its
voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes
in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

III.

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TODAY.

(*May 4, 1865*)

Hush'd be the camps to-day,
And soldiers let us drape our war-worn
weapons,
And each with musing soul retire to
celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.
No more for him life's stormy conflicts,

Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's
dark events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across
the sky.

But sing poet in our name,
Sing of the love we bore him—because
you, dweller in camps, know it
truly.

As they invault the coffin there,
Sing—as they close the doors of earth
upon him—one verse,
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

IV.

THIS DUST WAS ONCE THE MAN.

This dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under
whose cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history
known in any land or age,
Was saved the Union of these States.

LYRICS OF THE WAR.

BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles!
blow!

Through the windows—through doors
—burst like a ruthless force.

Into the solemn church, and scatter
the congregation,

Into the school where the scholar is
studying;

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no
happiness must he have now
with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace,
ploughing his field or gathering
his grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you
drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles!
blow!

Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds,

No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they continue?

Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—
you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles!
blow!

Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,

Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,

Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the
dead where they lie awaiting the
hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums
—so loud you bugles blow.

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS FATHER.

Come up from the fields father, here's
a letter from our Pete,

And come to the front door mother,
here's a letter from thy dear son.

Lo, 't is autumn,

Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yel-
lower and redder,

Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with
leaves fluttering in the moderate
wind,

Where apples ripe in the orchards hang
and grapes on the trellis'd vines,
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on
the vines?)

Smell you the buckwheat where the bees
were lately buzzing?)

Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so trans-
parent after the rain, and with
wondrous clouds,

Below too, all calm, all vital and beau-
tiful, and the farm prospers well.

Down in the fields all prospers well,
But now from the fields come father,
come at the daughter's call,
And come to the entry mother, to the
front door come right away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something
ominous, her steps trembling,
She does not tarry to smooth her hair
nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,
O this is not our son's writing, yet his
name is sign'd,
O a strange hand writes for our dear
son, O stricken mother's soul!

All swims before her eyes, flashes with
black, she catches the main words
only,

Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the
breast, cavalry skirmish, taken
to hospital,*

At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah now the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with
all its cities and farms,

Sickly white in the face and dull in the
head, very faint,

By the jamb of a door leans.

*Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-
grown daughter speaks through
her sobs,*

*The little sisters huddle around speech-
less and dismay'd,)*

*See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete
will soon be better.*

Alas poor boy, he will never be better,
(nor may-be needs to be better,
that brave and simple soul,)

While they stand at home at the door he
is dead already,
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,
She with thin form presently drest in
black,

By day her meals untouch'd, then at
night fitfully sleeping, often wak-
ing,

In the midnight waking, weeping, long-
ing with one deep longing,

O that she might withdraw unnoticed,
silent from life escape and with-
draw,

To follow, to seek, to be with her dear
dead son.

THE WOUND-DRESSER.

1.

An old man bending I come among new
faces,

Years looking backward resuming in
answer to children,

Come tell us old man, as from young
men and maidens that love me,
(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat
the alarum, and urge relentless
war,

But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face
droop'd and I resign'd myself,
To sit by the wounded and soothe them,
or silently watch the dead;)

Years hence of these scenes, of these
furious passions, these chances,
Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so
brave? the other was equally
brave;)

Now be witness again, paint the mighti-
est armies of earth,

Of those armies so rapid so wondrous
what saw you to tell us?

What stays with you latest and deepest?
of curious panics,

Of hard-fought engagements or sieges
tremendous what deepest re-
mains?

2

O maidens and young men I love and
that love me,

What you ask of my days those the
strangest and sudden your talk-
ing recalls,

Soldier alert I arrive after a long march
cover'd with sweat and dust,

In the nick of time I come, plunge in the
fight, loudly shout in the rush of
successful charge,

Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a
swift-running river they fade,

Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not
on soldiers' perils or soldiers'
joys,

(Both I remember well—many the hard-
ships, few the joys, yet I was
content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections,
While the world of gain and appearance
and mirth goes on.

So soon what is over forgotten, and
waves wash the imprints off the
sand,

With hinged knees returning I enter the
doors, (while for you up there,
Whoever you are, follow without noise
and be of strong heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground after the
battle brought in,

Where their priceless blood reddens the
grass the ground,

Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or
under the roof'd hospital,

To the long rows of cots up and down
each side I return,

To each and all one after another I draw
near, not one do I miss,

An attendant follows holding a tray, he
carries a refuse pail,

Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and
blood, emptied, and fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand to
dress wounds,
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp
yet unavoidable,
One turns to me his appealing eyes—
poor boy! I never knew you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this
moment to die for you, if that
would save you.

3

On, on I go, (open doors of time! open
hospital doors!)
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed
hand tear not the bandage
away,)
The neck of the cavalry-man with the
bullet through and through I ex-
amine,
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed
already the eye, yet life struggles
hard,

(Come sweet death! be persuaded O
beautiful death!

In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the ampu-
tated hand,

I undo the clotted lint, remove the
slough, wash off the matter and
blood,

Back on his pillow the soldier bends with
curv'd neck and side-falling head,

His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he
dares not look on the bloody
stump,

And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,
But a day or two more, for see the frame
all wasted and sinking,

And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot
with the bullet-wound,

Cleanse the one with a gnawing and
putrid gangrene, so sickening, so
offensive,

While the attendant stands behind aside
me holding the tray and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound
in the abdomen,

These and more I dress with impassive
hand, (yet deep in my breast a
fire, a burning flame.)

4

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
Returning, resuming, I thread my way
through the hospitals,

The hurt and wounded I pacify with
soothing hand,

I sit by the restless all the dark night,
some are so young,

Some suffer so much, I recall the experi-
ence sweet and sad,

(Many a soldier's loving arms about this
neck have cross'd and rested,

Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these
bearded lips.)

SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE.

(*Washington City, 1865*)

Spirit whose work is done—spirit of
dreadful hours!

Ere departing fade from my eyes your
forests of bayonets;

Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts,
(yet onward ever unfaltering
pressing,)

Spirit of many a solemn day and many
a savage scene—electric spirit,

That with muttering voice through the
war now closed, like a tireless
phantom flitted,

Rousing the land with breath of flame,
while you beat and beat the drum,

Now as the sound of the drum, hollow
and harsh to the last, reverbe-
rates round me,

As your ranks, your immortal ranks, re-
turn, return from the battles,
As the muskets of the young men yet
lean over their shoulders,
As I look on the bayonets bristling over
their shoulders,
As those slanted bayonets, whole forests
of them appearing in the dis-
tance, approach and pass on, re-
turning homeward,
Moving with steady motion, swaying to
and fro to the right and left,
Evenly lightly rising and falling while
the steps keep time;
Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one
day, but pale as death next day,
Touch my mouth ere you depart, press
my lips close,
Leave me your pulses of rage—bequeath
them to me—fill me with cur-
rents convulsive,
Let them scorch and blister out of my
chants when you are gone,
Let them identify you to the future in
these songs.

ASHES OF SOLDIERS.

Ashes of soldiers South or North,
As I muse retrospective murmuring a
chant in thought,
The war resumes, again to my sense
your shapes,
And again the advance of the armies.

Noiseless as mists and vapors,
From their graves in the trenches as-
cending,
From cemeteries all through Virginia
and Tennessee,
From every point of the compass out of
the countless graves,
In wafted clouds, in myriads large, or
squad of twos or threes or single
ones they come,
And silently gather round me.

Now sound no note O trumpeters,

Not at the head of my cavalry parading
on spirited horses,
With sabres drawn and glistening, and
carbines by their thighs, (ah my
brave horsemen!
My handsome tan-faced horsemen! what
life, what joy and pride,
With all the perils were yours.)

Nor you drummers, neither at reveille
at dawn,
Nor the long roll alarming the camp,
nor even the muffled beat for a
burial,
Nothing from you this time O drum-
mers bearing my warlike drums.

But aside from these and the marts of
wealth and the crowded prom-
enade,
Admitting around me comrades close
unseen by the rest and voiceless,
The slain elate and alive again, the dust
and debris alive,

I chant this chant of my silent soul in
the name of all dead soldiers.

Faces so pale with wondrous eyes, very
dear, gather closer yet,
Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost,
Invisible to the rest henceforth become
my companions,
Follow me ever—desert me not while I
live.

Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the
living—sweet are the musical
voices sounding,

But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead with
their silent eyes.

Dearest comrades, all is over and long
gone,

But love is not over—and what love, O
comrades!

Perfume from battle-fields rising up
from the fœtor arising.

Perfume therefore my chant, O love,
immortal love,
Give me to bathe the memories of all
dead soldiers,
Shroud them, embalm them, cover them
all over with tender pride.

Perfume all—make all wholesome,
Make these ashes to nourish and blos-
som,
O love, solve all, fructify all with the
last chemistry.

Give me exhaustless, make me a foun-
tain,
That I exhale love from me wherever
I go like a moist perennial dew,
For the ashes of all dead soldiers South
or North.

PENSIVE ON HER DEAD GAZING.

Pensive on her dead gazing I heard the
Mother of All,

Desperate on the torn bodies, on the
forms covering the battle-fields
gazing,

(As the last gun ceased, but the scent
of the powder-smoke linger'd,)

As she call'd to her earth with mourn-
ful voice while she stalk'd,

Absorb them well O my earth, she cried,
I charge you lose not my sons,
lose not an atom,

And you streams absorb them well, tak-
ing their dear blood,

And you local spots, and you airs that
swim above lightly impalpable,

And all you essences of soil and growth,
and you my rivers' depths,

And you mountain sides, and the woods
where my dear children's blood
trickling redden'd,

And you trees down in your roots to be-
queath to all future trees.

My dead absorb or South or North—my
young men's bodies absorb, and
their precious, precious blood,

Which holding in trust for me faith-
fully back again give me many
a year hence,

In unseen essence and odor of surface
and grass, centuries hence,

In blowing airs from the fields back
again give me my darlings, give
my immortal heroes,

Exhale me them centuries hence,
breathe me their breath, let not
an atom be lost,

O years and graves! O air and soil! O
my dead, an aroma sweet!

Exhale them perennial sweet death,
years, centuries hence.

CAMPS OF GREEN.

Not alone those camps of white, old com-
rades of the wars,

When as order'd forward, after a long
march,

Footsore and weary, soon as the light
lessens we halt for the night,

Some of us so fatigued carrying the gun
and knapsack, dropping asleep in
our tracks,

Others pitching the little tents, and the
fires lit up begin to sparkle,

Outposts of pickets posted surrounding
alert through the dark,

And a word provided for countersign,
careful for safety,

Till to the call of the drummers at day-
break loudly beating the drums,

We rise up refresh'd, the night and sleep
pass'd over, and resume our jour-
ney,

Or proceed to battle.

Lo, the camps of the tents of green,
Which the days of peace keep filling,
and the days of war keep filling,
With a mystic army, (is it too order'd
forward? is it too only halting
awhile,

Till night and sleep pass over?)

Now in those camps of green, in their
tents dotting the world,
In the parents, children, husbands,
wives in them, in the old and
young,
Sleeping under the sunlight, sleeping
under the moonlight, content and
silent there at last,
Behold the mighty bivouac-field and
waiting camp of all,
Of the corps and generals all, and the
President over the corps and gen-
erals all,
And of each of us O soldiers, and of
each and all in the ranks we
fought,
(There without hatred we all, all meet.)
For presently O soldiers, we too camp
in our place in the bivouac-camps
of green,
But we need not provide for outposts,
nor word for the countersign,
Nor drummer to beat the morning
drum.

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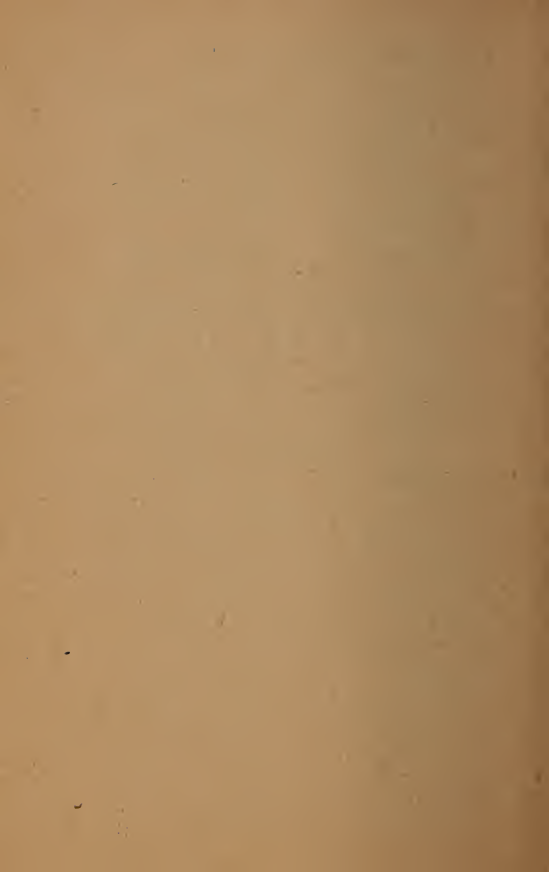
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